Principles for a Student-Led Evaluation: An Examination of Sound Discipline's Potential for Program Evaluation Reform

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Abstract

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This thesis examines the current program evaluation model utilized by Sound Discipline, a positive discipline nonprofit organization in Seattle, Washington, to assess the effectiveness of their whole school discipline reform model. While the programming centers around the experiences, learning, and development of children, the current evaluation model used by the organization collects data exclusively from adults. This thesis pulls from Critical Race and Cultural Historical Activity Theories, Participatory Action Research, and Participatory Design Research to propose a set of guiding principles for the establishment of a student-led program evaluation.

Principles for a Student-Led Evaluation

One year ago, I was invited to join a tour of an elementary school to see first-hand how their partnership with a local nonprofit organization was transforming the school culture around student discipline. Sound Discipline, the nonprofit, organized the visit to this school, one of several that served as a 'model school' for the organization. Six years into a partnership with Sound Discipline, this site was upheld as an example of the strength and vision of the organization's work. Twelve fellow visitors and I received a brief introduction to the organization and to the school site. I stood among fellow educators, potential donors, and staff from prospective partner schools as representatives from Sound Discipline described the mission of the organization: to make schools into spaces where students and their families feel like they belong and where mistakes are framed as a part of learning. In small groups, we were led to classrooms to observe positive discipline in practice. We sank down into too-small chairs in the back of a room, visitors to the classroom meeting. Sitting in a circle on a rug, students aired grievances from their day and gave shout outs to peers for moments of kindness or integrity. Apologies were asked for and given. While the teacher facilitated the conversation, the room was filled with student voices.

As the bell rang, we made our way to the final stage of the visit: the student panel. Surrounded by low, library bookshelves, I sat in awe of the five children of varying ages who came to share their experiences with our group. I was struck first by their confidence. These elementary students did not hesitate to share stories about how Sound Discipline's programming has supported them in learning about themselves and in resolving conflicts with peers. The panel was quick to respond to questions from our group, often speaking over each other in what

seemed like excitement. However, nearing the end of our time, a fellow visitor asked a question that brought a distinctly different response: “what happens when you have a conflict with a teacher?” Students on the panel made eye contact with each other, but none offered a quick response. Finally, one of the older students spoke up, describing that students do not bring up conflicts with teachers in the same way. Bringing up an issue with a teacher is not something that is done in a classroom meeting. Instead, they said, students discuss these issues amongst themselves and work out their own solutions.

My mind spun as I walked out the front door of the school. I was stunned by the apparent confidence of all the students I met, in particular as they spoke so directly about their emotional needs. The vibe of the school was markedly different from others I experienced as a student or as a teacher; student voices filled the air and led conversations in deep and meaningful ways. Yet, the student panel’s response to the question about conflict with adults in the school pointed to some underlying tensions in the implementation of the positive discipline approach. As I learned more about Sound Discipline and their work in partnership with schools, I discovered that part of the underlying tension I sensed on that first day was due to the inherent power dynamics that exist between the adults and youth in schools. In addition, I witnessed these power dynamics reinforced through the types of data that Sound Discipline was collecting in their evaluation cycles. As noted by Sound Discipline’s leadership, the organization has attempted to collect evaluative data from students in the past, but has successfully collected data solely from parents, staff, and teachers. I wondered how Sound Discipline, an organization with youth and their experiences in school as the central foci of their work, could gather more substantive insights

from the very students they were aiming to support. This wondering led me to explore what a student-led program evaluation could look like in the context of Sound Discipline.

A Student-Led Program Evaluation

In the fight for equity, process and practice matter (M. Bang, personal communication, March 5, 2019). In other words, work that strives for equity must put intentional focus on the form of designs and interactions that feed the work. This thesis seeks to draw upon this idea, review the literature pertaining to youth and research, and present an example model for engaging youth in research about themselves in the context of the Sound Discipline program. The proposed program evaluation model is informed primarily by Participatory Design Research and Participatory Action Research. It derives theoretical framing from Critical Race Theory and sociocultural perspectives on learning and development. While this evaluation is bound to the central claims made by Sound Discipline regarding the impact of their work, this paper will push beyond them to build connections to belonging, race, power, and voice.

This thesis seeks to make an argument that a student-led program evaluation is critical for creating a more equitable, more effective program model and presents guiding principles for what a student-led evaluation process could look like for Sound Discipline. In addition, this thesis holds implications more broadly for conducting research in partnership with youth in a manner that directly attends to power and agency. Below, I provide a description of Sound Discipline, review relevant conceptual frameworks, explore existing models of engaging youth in research, and present guiding principles for the development of a student-led evaluation of the organization's programming.

Sound Discipline

Background

Sound Discipline was founded in 2007 with the vision of transforming the manner in which parents and educators engage in disciplinary actions with the youth in their lives (Sound Discipline, 2019). While based in Seattle, WA, the nonprofit's service area quickly stretched across the greater Puget Sound area. The organization was founded with the intent to push back on historically-dominant modes of discipline, particularly those rooted in behaviorism (Sound Discipline, 2019). These historically dominant forms of discipline utilize forms of punishment and reinforcement in order to change and control behavior. In opposition to behaviorism-informed models, the Sound Discipline team built their parent and educator support models around a positive discipline ideology that folds in emerging knowledge from studies of trauma-informed practices, positive discipline as informed by the work of Alfred Adler and Rudolph Dreikurs, and social-emotional learning and development (Sound Discipline, 2019). The positive discipline model taken up by Sound Discipline centers around several core tenets, including building students' sense of belonging and connection to their school community, creating avenues for communal problem solving and harm remediation, and providing students with space to explore their emotions and develop strategies for managing emotions in a healthy manner.

Currently, Sound Discipline carries out programming in three main areas: 1) parent support, 2) parent educator training, and 3) the whole school discipline model. Sound Discipline's parent programming comes in the form of brief introductory classes as well as a six-week intensive class series. These classes build off of parent lived-experience, centering

parents as the experts on their relationships with their children. They are voluntary, paid courses and currently do not align with Sound Discipline's work in partner schools. While the organization intends to offer parent courses in tandem with their whole school reform, this is not yet a part of their programming model (J. McVittie, personal communication, April 4, 2019). Sound Discipline focuses on supporting parents as they build stronger relationships with their children. In addition to employing a team of parent educators to carry out this work, Sound Discipline provides training, professional development, and certification for current and prospective parent educators. The focus of this project, however, is on Sound Discipline's whole-school student discipline model.

Whole School Discipline Model

The whole school discipline model is the focus of this paper. This model consists of two primary components: the data team and school staff training. The data team, comprised of both staff from a school site and Sound Discipline staff, collects, analyzes, and uses student discipline data to inform changes in practice. The sources of these data may change from school to school, but typically include disciplinary reports that detail individual incidents for which a student received disciplinary action. The goal of this work is to use data to see patterns in student discipline actions, understand the story behind them, and ultimately design interventions that address root causes. For example, at one partner school, the data team recognized that the majority of student discipline reports were written during recess and other outdoor periods of the day. Upon further examination of this trend, the team came to learn the root cause of repeated disciplinary actions: too few balls on the playground. In the excitement and fervor to get to one of a limited supply of balls, student interactions became heated and were met with disciplinary

actions from supervising adults. With this information, the school designed a simple intervention, the introduction of more playground balls, and disciplinary actions at the school dropped (J. McVittie, personal communication, April 4, 2019).

In addition to the establishment of data teams, Sound Discipline trains and supports staff at the school in implementing a positive discipline model at the school site. An example, and a major component of the positive discipline model, is the use of classroom meetings (as described in the introductory text). These meetings occur on a daily basis on their regular schedule, and sometimes more frequently if circumstances arise. While individual classrooms have some flexibility in the content of the meetings, they tend to follow the same basic structure which Sound Discipline provides; the teacher facilitates conversations, which center around highlighting successes and coming up with creative solutions to problems. These meetings often begin with addressing whole-class topics like a report from the gym teacher that the class had trouble focusing on the day's activity (J. McVittie, personal communication, April 4, 2019). During this time, the class has opportunities to discuss what happened, answer teacher questions, and come up with solutions going forward. The latter portion of each classroom meeting is dedicated to attending to and remedying individual harms. Students have opportunities to directly name harm done to them by others and to ask for forgiveness for harm they caused.

Current Evaluation Methods of Sound Discipline

In order to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of their work, Sound Discipline collects data from participants in both the whole-school and parent education programs. Collected primarily through surveys, this data is then used to inform the work of the organization going forward. However, the organization has yet to find a manner in which to make space for

children's voices in the evaluation process. Currently, data is collected exclusively from parents and staff at partner schools. While the leadership of the organization recognize the importance of opening up space for student voice in this process and has attempted to do so in the past, Sound Discipline has yet to establish a workable system for incorporating student narratives into their program evaluation.

The programming run by Sound Discipline centers entirely around youth well-being; the outcomes the organization seeks to engender directly relate to student experience in schools. However, current evaluative measures depend on the input of adults in the school system to accurately and adequately reflect the experiences of youth. The model proposed in this paper extends current Sound Discipline evaluation measures to fill in this gap and attend to student voice with depth.

Student Discipline, Race, and Identities

Sound Discipline takes an identity-neutral stance to their work. This means that the organization does not explicitly recognize the differential impact that students may have with disciplinary systems due to their identities or culture. Instead, Sound Discipline argues that their programming, rooted in positive discipline, "works across cultures" (Sound Discipline, 2019). The organization argues that positive discipline brings positive outcomes for all youth, regardless of identities such as race or culture.

While the data may support this argument, this perspective overlooks the fact that individual students have vastly different experiences with student discipline; patterns in these differences point directly to the impact of student identities, or rather, the manner in which schools respond to students, based on their identities.

Traditional models of punitive discipline necessitate power inequity to maintain order (Foucault, 1979). In schools, punitive discipline is typically seen through exclusion by suspension or expulsion. Adults in education spaces wield this power disproportionately; youth whose identities lie at the intersections between Black, Latinx, Native, male, female, (dis)able, and LGBTQ+ experience punitive discipline in schools at alarmingly higher proportions than fellow students (Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008; Smolkowski et al., 2016). This pattern does not discriminate by age; this disproportionality stretches from preschools to colleges (Welsh & Little, 2018).

Two key points complicate these data. First, these data only represent the incidents that rose to the level of documentation within a given school. The threshold for writing a disciplinary report, demarcated by perceived student behaviors, is subjective and often varies from school to school. Even more, individual adults in school spaces hold enormous discretion over implementation on the ground (Lipsky, 1980). Therefore, examination of student discipline through disciplinary records overlooks a vast number of student experiences with discipline that do not merit a disciplinary report.

Additionally, these data are presented in numbers, but it is important to recognize that these numbers serve as proxies for lived experiences. Actual lived experience of discipline within school settings are more insidious and complex than these data represent. For example, these data do not represent student experiences of day-to-day experiences of discipline, including surveillance, microaggressions, and the impact of physical structures like fencing or metal detectors (Annamma, 2016). The impact of these elements, not represented in typical disciplinary data, present important considerations for understanding the depth of student

experiences of discipline. Comprehensive examination of student discipline must attend to deeper scripts than quantitative data allows. A student-centered program evaluation must depart from more traditional data-collection models, towards more authentic participation. One way to accomplish this is through designing for belonging.

Directly attending to belonging is of particular importance in the context of this work. Student discipline is inextricably linked to issues of belonging as discipline is comprised of actions and structures that are intentionally exclusionary and directly compromise perceptions of belonging (Foucault, 1979). Nasir, Rosebury, Warren, and Lee (2014) assert that belonging and inclusion are tied to feelings of physical and psychological safety. Physical safety refers to security or protection against bodily harm. Psychological safety, on the other hand, refers to "a sense of comfort, willingness to take risks and be oneself, and a feeling of acceptance," (p. 491). Nasir et al. (2014) assert that these safeties, and the sense of belonging and inclusion they foster, are realized in "both the organization itself and through the interaction that occurs within these contexts," (p. 492). Thus, belonging is cultivated through both the design of a learning environment as well as the manner in which individuals in the environment interact.

Designing for belonging requires intentional focus on the realities of student experiences with discipline. As adults in schools disproportionately utilize disciplinary power on the basis of student race, ethnicity, gender, ability, and sexual orientation, one cannot avoid recognizing that students whose identities intersect at these points hold distinct expertise with regard to student discipline. While Sound Discipline does not explicitly address the manner in which identities, and race in particular, impacts the organization's work, the guiding principles proposed in this paper recognize and lift up the distinct expertise of students most impacted by student discipline

systems. Critical Race and Cultural-Historical Activity Theories provide a framework through which the necessity for more complexity in the design of a program evaluation may be examined.

Conceptual Frameworks: Critical Race Theory and CHAT

"Power is always present in learning contexts, and so no learning design can be successful if power is not taken into account" (Esmonde & Booker, 2017, p. 4).

Critical Race Theory

While initially derived from legal studies (Bell, 1980; Crenshaw, 1995), Critical Race Theory (CRT) was carried into education through the work of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) as a lens through which to examine power, privilege, and equity within learning settings. CRT directly attends to implicit and explicit bias at interpersonal, institutional, and systemic levels (Parsons, 2017). While some variety exists in the manner in which CRT is taken up in different disciplines, five core elements comprise this theoretical perspective: 1) counternarratives as essential knowledge, 2) the permanence and pervasiveness of racism, 3) Whiteness as property, 4) interest convergence, and 5) critiques of liberalism, including the glorification of neutrality (DeCuir and Dixson, 2004; Esmonde, 2017). CRT actively promotes social justice-oriented challenges to traditional power structures and systems.

Scholars in CRT introduced the concept of master narratives to describe the stories and bodies of knowledge created by dominant groups in a society (Matsuda, 1995). CRT asserts that master narratives are established as more than the norm, but as a singular truth; these narratives are legitimized through many means, including the writing of history by dominant groups and

the inclusion of only dominant voices in decision-making. Counternarratives complicate this notion by demonstrating that there exists no one truth, but rather multiple truths, none of which are universal. Counternarratives are created by individuals from historically non-dominant communities. Counternarratives do not represent additional perspectives or parts of a whole, but rather, are whole truths themselves (Stanley, 2007).

In the context of schooling, master narratives are exemplified through normative practices like age division and the separation of disciplines (e.g. science, art, language arts) (M. Bang, personal communication, March 5, 2019). Within research on schools, master narratives are created *about* children, and primarily *by* adults. Often well-meaning adults who believe they are speaking in a way that will ultimately benefit the young people who they seek to represent. However, master narratives bear negative consequences. Most centrally, this tendency for adults to speak on behalf of children overlooks the humanity of young people. Pushing back on this normative practice of centering adult voices in education by opening up space for students to create their own counter-narratives is a radical act.

The Sound Discipline school program evaluation system, in its current form, attends to master narratives. Adults in the school site (teachers, principals, and parents) have avenues for providing feedback that the organization folds into their work going forward. The agency of adults in this system is affirmed through the actual structure of the program evaluation; their voices are sought after and upheld as worthy and relevant. The evaluation model I will propose in this paper seeks to challenge this structure, opening up space for the counter-narratives of students, particularly those students for whom student discipline plays a disproportionate role in their school experience.

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

Explicitly attending to race, identities, and power in relation to Sound Discipline's programming is essential. CHAT is one theoretical framework that, in addition to CRT, can help provide a lens through which this examination is possible. Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) is uniquely situated as a theoretical framework through which to examine power as it relates to Sound Discipline's programming. Esmonde (2017) asserts that within sociocultural theories on learning and development, the third generation of CHAT presents potential as a means of examining systems of power. CHAT positions the activity system as the unit of analysis (Engeström & Sannino, 2010). An activity system is comprised of a group of individuals who operate with a variety of tools in their mediation of a selected object or work towards a shared goal (Engeström & Sannino, 2010; Danish, 2014). Previous generations of CHAT examine single activity systems. Third-generation CHAT, on the other hand, pushes for the examination of two or more activity systems as they interact with each other. In doing this, third-generation CHAT opens up space to examine power inequities between activity systems as they engage in the mediation of the selected object (Danish, 2014). For example, say the selected object is a classroom meeting. A third generation CHAT approach might examine the manner in which the teacher, student, and administrator activity systems interact in their mediation of this selected object. Through this examination, one might see power imbalances between activity systems in decision-making as administrators evaluate the effectiveness of classroom meetings without input from teachers or students.

Critical race theory and sociocultural theories, woven together, provide a different lens through which we can examine issues of race and power as they emerge in day-to-day cultural

experiences. These bodies of theory inform this project at two levels: 1) structural, through re-examination of a program evaluation, and 2) substantive, opening space for student experiences of student discipline. Rejecting previous program evaluation work that overlooks the input of all stakeholders, the structure of this design project demands recognition of counter-narratives. On another level, the substance of this project reflects recognition that experience of discipline directly relates to identities and positionality within a system.

Student experiences with discipline in schools and evaluative measures are the day-to-day cultural practices to be examined through the program evaluation design process. Positioning cultural practices as units of analysis can provide insight into the ways in which systems of power are perpetuated in everyday practices (Nasir & Hand, 2006). Thus, creating space for youth to provide insight regarding experiences of discipline offers opportunities to uplift powerful and rich data. Research methodologies that center participant agency provide the most promising avenues for carrying out this work.

Existing Models of Engaging Youth in Research

This project seeks to address issues of reflexivity in research from a design perspective (Levinson, 1998). How can we address the issue of to whom research is ultimately in service to by changing the way we conduct research? At one level, this can be viewed as a push towards increased collaboration. Examinations of successful collaboration point to key elements that facilitate positive outcomes. Ansell and Gash (2007) assert that intended outcomes of collaboration are more effectively met when particular attention is placed on the design process. Long-term commitment from partners, and iterative evaluation processes also contribute to the

overall success of the collaborative team (Ansell & Gash, 2007). In a manner that is distinct from other research methodologies, PDR and PAR ground knowledge in lived experience.

Participatory Design Research

Collaboration in research and consultation work takes many forms. Design-based research (DBR) is a model of conducting context-specific research in which a research team builds trust in a particular community, designs a particular intervention for a presenting issue, and engages in an iterative evaluation and implementation cycle (Brown, 1992; Cobb et al., 2003; Bell, 2004). This design centers around a specific problem, with the ultimate product being some form of intervention that seeks to remedy it. Rather than progressing in a linear fashion through a research and design sequence, moving from problem to solution, the DBR approach utilizes a repeating or iterative cycles model (See Appendix A). In each mini-cycle, the research project goes through three basic phases: 1) identification of a specific problem and design of an intervention to address it, 2) implementation of the design, and 3) evaluation of implementation and outcomes (McKenney & Reeves, 2013). Evaluation does not mark the end of the project, but rather a point at which to report out findings and establish the jumping-off point for the next mini-cycle of design.

Participatory design research (PDR) expands upon the DBR model. PDR pushes back against more traditional models of research that draw clear divisions between researchers and participants, asserting the need for participant agency in the design and research processes (Bang & Vossoughi, 2014). Traditional researchers and participants engage in the construction of a research project, including its structure and aims, as co-designers. This shift in traditional subject-researcher roles is referred to as role-remediation, and represents a significant shift

towards flattening power and agency structures within research (Bang & Vossoughi, 2014). A PDR model positions the individuals most impacted by a given environment, those who arguably have the greatest depth of knowledge to offer, as those driving the design process.

Participatory Action Research

Similar to PDR, Participatory Action Research (PAR) centers those most directly impacted by a given problem. This model centers equity and draws on participant expertise as its primary source of knowledge (Ozer, 2017). The nature of this model, that individuals identify and create solutions to their own problems, aims to support health and wellness of individuals and their communities (Ozer, 2017). Intentionally context-specific, PAR does not aim to produce replicable findings (Foth & Axup, 2006). Rather than centering around the design of an intervention, PAR orients around planning for social change. Also like design methodologies, PAR models itself around iterative cycles. The first stage of a PAR cycle focuses on researching and evaluating a given problem. The research team then creates and implements a plan oriented towards engendering a desired change. Results of the action's outcomes are measured. The entire design cycle is evaluated in a final stage of reflection, providing insight and changes to inform the next mini-cycle of action.

These research methodologies attend to reflexivity by intentionally shifting the roles that 'researchers' and 'participants' take on, resulting in shifts in agency and power within the research structure.

Agency and Power

These research models attends directly to power and agency in the creation of knowledge (Bang & Vossoughi, 2014; Ozer, 2017). The co-design model places student-researchers in positions with agency and power in the design process. An intended outcome of this element of the intervention is to incite role-remediation within the evaluation of education programming.

By nature of co-design, the structure of the design will necessarily change throughout the course of the intervention period. In this model, the primary problem is the organization's lack of student voice in the evaluation of programming (Engström, 2001). In attempt to remedy this problem, the co-design process is introduced. As student-researchers engage in the co-design process, their ideas, beliefs, and lived experiences will weave into the structure. Thus, the structure of the design will necessarily change throughout the course of the co-design process, building meaning and validity as the student-researchers root the design in their lived experience (Engström, 2001).

The intended role remediation is of particular importance in the case presented in this paper, due to the nature of Sound Discipline's programming and intended outcomes. The intended outcomes of implementing the whole-school model are primarily focused on student experience and growth. The organization seeks to be successful in advancing individual students' development of social-emotional skills, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Sound Discipline, 2019). Role remediation, shifting towards students as agentic designers of their environment, aligns directly with this aim. Continued measurement of such outcomes without student voice carries risks, including overlooking significant data and collecting incorrect data, particularly as it is filtered through adult voices. For example, continuing to obtain formative evaluation data

exclusively from teachers and administrators in a school site overlooks rich data and insights that students have to offer.

Ultimately, a shift towards attending to student voice better aligns Sound Discipline to measure their intended outcomes. The co-design model, as it seeks to fundamentally shift power roles within the program's evaluation, holds the potential to cause further-reaching epistemological changes. Student-researchers can shift into the role of knowledge creators and builders. As a result, students could not simply give input regarding their experiences of Sound Discipline's programming, but could share decision-making power.

Youth and Research

The last three decades have seen an emergence of the participatory rights perspective on research with youth in the social sciences. In 1989, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child produced 54 articles, encompassing an international bill of rights for youth (Alderson, 2001). Alderson (2001) asserts that the publication of these articles marks a turn in thinking regarding the rights of youth; beyond more traditional rights to protection from harm and provision of basic needs, these articles affirmed youth rights to expression with regard to issues of personal significance.

In the three decades since the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, adults who work with youth have explored how research can best support this protected right to expression. Hill (2006) points to the recent trend of blurring lines between academic research and private or public consultation with youth participants. Traditional elements of agency consultation, like game play in a focus group, have been adopted into academic research methodologies, while agencies pick up techniques like surveys or interviews from academia.

Working in partnership with youth in a research capacity presents certain complications. Differences in legal status, developmental stages, and historically-reinforced power imbalances make for significant barriers to partnership between adult and youth researchers (Schelbe et al., 2015). However, many researchers attend to these complications by addressing root causes and designing studies to directly address them.

Alderson (2012) discusses a shift in thinking with regard to youth participation in research which she refers to as 'rights-respecting research.' The author asserts that meaningful youth participation requires that adult researchers address deep-seeded historical concerns with regard to power and respect in research. Structural changes to research design, like joining into research with youth as co-authors, are advocated as ways to accomplish this (Alderson, 2012).

These authors provide a framework for considering research with youth from a conceptual perspective; however, it is important to examine the manner in which these theories are being carried out in practice. Schelbe et al. (2015) discuss key elements of research design and practice when working in partnership with youth. Emphasizing the need to build trust first, the authors suggest identifying and building relationships with key players in the school setting (Shelbe et al., 2015). These individuals are identified by their established foundation of trust with students and by their interest in the research project. Shelbe et al. identify the need to clearly and thoroughly explain the boundaries of both consent and assent processes, and to establish a system of meaningful compensation for student-researchers (2015).

Coad & Evans (2008) examine multiple degrees of youth participation in data analysis, including a case in which youth and adults work as co-researchers throughout the research process. The adults on the research team recruited and selected youth co-researchers and carried

out introductory trainings on fundamental skills of qualitative data analysis (Coad & Evans, 2008). Throughout the data analysis process, adult and youth researchers analyzed and coded transcripts using creative methods, including artistic interpretation of quotes.

Reflecting on the outcomes of this project, the authors advocate for several distinct strategies with regard to conducting research with youth. Prior to engaging in the research process itself, both adult researchers and youth researchers should receive some kind of basic instruction in preparation for engagement in the project. For youth researchers, this education would center around gaining experience with the research methods and skills required of the project. For the adult researchers, Coad & Evans (2008) advocate for competency training for working in partnership with youth. Additionally, the authors assert the need to plan for an adequate amount of time to engage in the research process as a whole, with a focus on the preliminary stages. In addition to basic training for all researchers, Coad & Evans (2008) point to the crucial importance of building in time to build trust between all researchers on the team prior to and overlapping with the beginning stages of the research process. Finally, the authors argue that adult researchers must be consistent in protecting space for youth researchers at every stage of the process, from the design of the study, through analysis and presentation of outcomes.

Youth participation in research is complicated by several real and potential barriers. Many institutions that are vested with the safety and security of children, including schools, resist youth participation in research on the grounds of liability, limited resources, or concerns for confidentiality (Coad & Evans, 2008). Given the protective status of youth, research on sensitive topics may present complicating issues should youth disclose risky behaviors or

experiences (Schelbe et al., 2015). An issue that requires further examination is that of making participation in research a meaningful and desirable experience for youth.

Youth willingness to take part in research has been found to hinge upon the perceived existence of certain factors: interest in the topic of research, educational gain through participation, therapeutic gain through participation, empowerment through participation, desire to participate in a new experience, and motivation to miss class (Edwards & Alldred, 1999; Punch, 2002). Hill's (2006) qualitative examination of youth perspectives on various research methodologies suggested several common values held by youth participating in research. These values center around research creating tangible benefits for youth, using a broad range of methods, and communicating honestly and openly about the scope of the project (Hill, 2006). Additionally, youth in this study made two significant points with regard to voice and power. First, they emphasized the need for greater fairness or equity in whose voices are brought into research (Hill, 2006). Finally, those youth who are a part of a research project should be respected for holding both unique knowledge with regard to their worlds and legitimate opinions about issues of consequence (Hill, 2006).

Past research into youth participation in research provides insight that can be carried forward into Sound Discipline's program evaluation. In the following section, I will draw upon these insights to propose core principles to guide Sound Discipline's development of a student-led program evaluation.

Guiding Principles for a Student-Led Program Evaluation

These guiding principles seek to build off of prior knowledge regarding youth participation in research and ultimately reflect a shift in values towards how we look at youth participation in research. This value shift is present in the following principles, which are intended to guide Sound Discipline in their creation of a student-led program evaluation system. The four guiding principles I propose are: 1) maintain student leadership at each step of the process, 2) directly address disproportionality in experience of student discipline on the basis of intersecting identities (including, but not limited to: class, gender, sexual orientation, and disability status) including race, 3) provide space for iterative, student-led design, and 4) put adequate time and resources behind the work to allow for space to develop trust and invest in necessary training.

It should be noted that these principles are adult-made. While they may provide a workable foundation from which to build an evaluation, the ultimate design must be flexible to youth interests and needs. Thus, the adults invested with the power to implement this model at a school site must do so with the understanding that these principles ask for decision-making power to be shared with students in a manner that is atypical for most school settings.

CHAT provides the underlying conceptual framework for these principles. This body of theory posits that power, and the manner in which it operates in a given context, can be examined through the interactions between activity systems around a shared object (Engeström & Sannino, 2010; Danish, 2014). In this context, the shared object is Sound Discipline's programming. In its current state, evaluation of this programming attends to one primary activity system: staff and administrators in the school. Through the incorporation of an additional activity

system, students, these principles push Sound Discipline's evaluation system to attend directly to issues of power and inequity.

1. Space for Iterative, Student-Led Design and Action

Students who experience Sound Discipline programming hold the most comprehensive insights into what lines of inquiry and processes are the best fit for evaluating its effectiveness. Thus, rather than impose a given program evaluation model, I suggest that Sound Discipline open space for students to design a novel evaluation and action model. Like participatory design and participatory action research, an ideal framework for carrying out this design work is comprised of mini-cycles of design that repeat, allowing for reflection from one to inform action in the next. (See Appendix B for a suggested design process). In this model, students hold opportunities to both design an evaluation model and plan around emergent foci of direct action. For example, in beginning to examine the manner in which Sound Discipline programming is currently functioning in the site, the research group might become aware of an issue with a particular adult in the school. Waiting to report out this finding later on in the design cycle may not be ethically or practically optimal. Instead, in a manner that aligns with PAR, the group may seek to plan for change around this issue with more urgency.

2. Directly Address Disproportionality

Critical Race Theory demands direct attention to race-based biases at individual, structural, and systemic levels. Disproportionality in student experience of discipline in schools is explicitly racialized and is evident across intersecting identities including class, gender, sexual

orientation, and disability status. Thus, attending directly to race and identities is essential given the content of Sound Discipline's programming. This component asks for a significant shift in Sound Discipline's work, given their historical identity-neutral stance. While the organization may not currently be prepared to take on such a transition, incorporating direct attention to identity with regard to student experience of discipline is essential to understanding this issue in its complexity.

In order to best facilitate this attention, adult researchers on the team require some fundamental training in how to carry out dialogue around race, identity, and bias, particularly with young children. Ideal candidates for this work come into it with a background in facilitating or participating in these conversations. Adult researchers should be equipped to not only assist in facilitating these conversations, but also in discussing them with family members, staff, and administrators in the school community.

Attention to disproportionality may take place at multiple levels. At the individual level, this examination may present as a student or particular student discussing personal experiences within the school community. At an institutional level, students might explore school-level discipline data to see if there exist any patterns in student experiences across their school community. This work may then be compared to data in other schools in the area or district, attending to system-level information.

In order to adequately evaluate the impact of Sound Discipline's programming, direct attention must be paid to differences in student experiences across race and intersecting identities. While this attention should not be imposed or forced into conversation, opening up

space for disproportionality to be considered by students provides necessary authenticity to the design process.

3. Maintain Student Leadership at Every Stage

In order to adequately attend to counternarratives, students engaged in this work should maintain leadership and decision-making power at each stage of this design process. It is essential that the student-researchers maintain control over the design process for several reasons. As the individuals most directly affected, they will be able to craft the most informative logical and practical program evaluation for this programming. The choice to uphold students as leaders in this process aligns the design process with role-remediation expected from challenging master narratives. As students take on leadership roles and adults serve in supporting roles, decision-making power shifts. This shift reflects a necessary transition towards fostering student agency in the evaluation of Sound Discipline programming.

On the ground, the maintenance of student leadership in the design process should be evident at each stage of the evaluation. This includes the selection of students who ultimately participate. Providing for a greater degree of fairness in this process (Hill, 2006), a system of democratic nomination and election of participants may provide an avenue for students to maintain agency in this process. Moving into the design process, student voices should dominate conversations and student opinions recognized for their authority. Adults are a necessary to the design process. However, he adults on the research team should aim to provide students with fundamental knowledge about participatory design and participatory action research methods and

practices but step back and allow students to take control of the design process, including strategies for implementation and addressing emergent needs for direct action.

4. Put in the Work

Relational work requires the dedication of many resources, including time, emotional labor, and money. It can be argued that putting in this work does not create tangible outcomes. If the ultimate goal is a program evaluation, what is the point of taking time to build relationships? This principle challenges this assumption and pulls from Nasir, Rosebury, Warren, and Lee (2014) to assert that fostering belonging is essential to designing for equity.

The success of implementing a new form of program evaluation, one that departs from more traditional models, depends on developing and sustaining buy-in from students, families, staff, and administrators at a given school site. In school environments that are often stretched thin in terms of resources and staff, building support for this project and building trust within the school site are deeply intertwined. Taking adequate time to build trust with the youth engaged in this work, and within the broader school community is central to engendering an equitable and successful evaluation.

The adult researchers tasked with inciting this research project (Sound Discipline staff or partners) may begin by identifying key agents within the school site. These individuals could be students, parents or guardians, teachers, staff, or any other individuals in the school space who might become advocates for the project. Ideally, these individuals are trusted members of the school community. Identifying and beginning to work in partnership with key agents in the school site is one way to build trust with the school community as a whole. In addition,

adult-researchers may attend school events of significance, including parent-teacher association meetings, school assemblies, and classroom meetings. The aim of this time is not to recruit participants, but rather to begin to integrate into the school site and build trust within the community. Building trust with individual students that become engaged in this work requires careful attention to establishing relationships. Adult researchers invested in this work must be willing to take the time to be vulnerable and build trust before engaging in the work of designing the program evaluation.

The most effective and authentic feedback on Sound Discipline programming will come from students who believe that their voices count and will be heard. Building in time and resources to dedicate towards establishing trust with students and the broader school community is essential to developing a more authentic program evaluation.

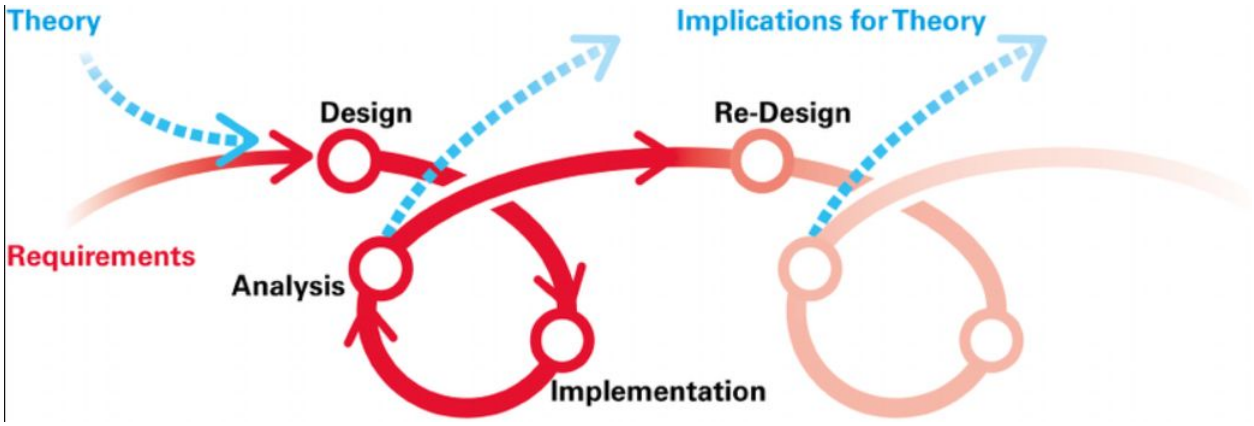
Conclusion

Opening up space for the development of authentically student-led work pushes back on historical power structures within schooling. The guiding principles presented in this paper seek to push Sound Discipline's current program evaluation model in a new direction. Structured around fundamental concepts from Critical Race Theory and Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, these principles push Sound Discipline's evaluation to open up space to engage authentically in partnership with students, to recognize students as crucial creators of knowledge and design, and to directly consider disproportionality in experiences of discipline on the basis of intersecting student identities, including race.

While the guiding principles presented in this thesis speak directly to Sound Discipline's program evaluation model, they hold broad implications for conducting research in partnership with youth in a manner that strives for equity through design. Centering youth as leaders and knowledge creators, explicitly attending to present biases, and investing in trust-building relational work are tenets to be explored in future research. Future projects may be able to inform whether these principles, when carried out into empirical research, bear tangible results with regard to creating more equitable, authentic partnerships with youth.

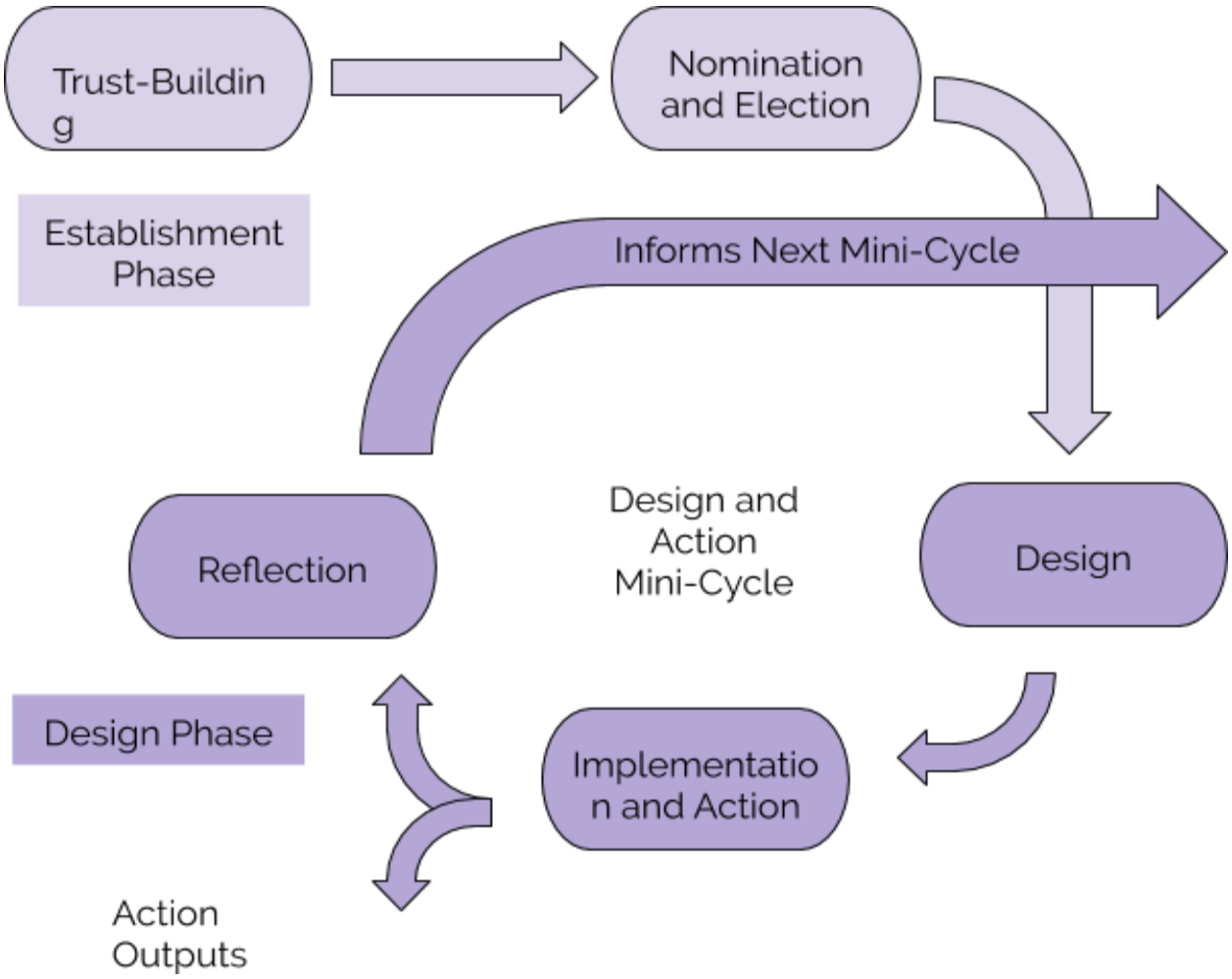
On future visits to Sound Discipline schools, the student panel might sound a bit different. Student voices may express concerns and point to emerging issues in their community that are in need of attention as they did on my visit a year ago. These voices, rather than sitting idly in the minds of school visitors, will hold the power to incite change.

Appendix A



(Fraefel, 2014)

Appendix B


Trust-Buildin g
Nomination and Election
Establishment Phase
Informs Next Mini-Cycle
Reflection
Design and Action Mini-Cycle
Design
Design Phase
Implementatio n and Action
Action Outputs

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